

# Arcane Cymbals

## *...Swishes, Dragons, & Einstein in Your Trapcase*

As all drummers know, cymbals add many different tonal colors to your drumkit. Aside from the usual hi-hats, crashes, and rides, there are unusual cymbals and cymbal combinations which will allow a variety of effects and sounds.

### White Noise

Billy Cobham made popular the idea of mounting china (swish) cymbals upside-down, for a "bangy" sound, and many drummers are still using this set-up. For a drier sound, another smaller cymbal can be placed inside of the china cymbal. When the china is struck, the smaller cymbal also reacts, and chokes the crashiness of the china, creating a "white noise burst." I'm using one such combination in my own setup, with an upside-down A. Zildjian 18" Thin Swish, and a Meinl Dragon 11" splash placed upside-down against the swish. (Not too tight though, as excessively tightened cymbals have a tendency to crack.) This combination lends itself well to accents and syncopated rhythms, and it's also quite loud!

Terry Bozzio varies this idea by placing a china rightside-up, directly on top of a crash cymbal. The curved bottom bow the the china rests on the crash, and this combination produces a slightly different white noise effect.

Terry Bozzio is certainly an innovator, as I recently witnessed at a clinic of his. Besides his regular hi-hats, Terry also had a pair of Paiste Heavy Bell cymbals set up as hi-hats. This sound really has to be heard—it's high-pitched and piercing, and blended perfectly with the rest of his unconventional cymbals. (I think Terry is mounting some of his cymbals inside Roto-Tom castings!)

Sabian makes a pair of 10" Mini-hats, which are nice as an extra hi-hat sound. Being smaller than the usual 14" hi-hats, they're high pitched and speak more quickly.

One of the latest trends is using a remote, cable-operated hi-hat stand to mount a second pair of hi-hats. Drum Workshop, Tama, and Pearl all manufacture some version of this. The remote

stand allows placement of the hi-hats anywhere in your setup, by clamping the remote holder onto an existing cymbal stand, tom stand, or drum rack. The hi-hats will open and close as usual, as the action is controlled by a flexible cable routed off the stand's base.

Tama also makes a holder for a permanently closed pair of hi-hats, primarily for double bass drum players, which can be tensioned loosely for a washy sound, or tightly. Having a second hi-hat really does make sense — after all, we use different crash cymbals and toms! Some drummers even set up two snare drums in their kit, but that's another subject entirely.

### Round Sound

One of my personal all-time favorites is the bell cymbal. This cymbal expands upon the bell sound of a conventional ride cymbal, being much louder and clearer. The forerunner was the UFIP Icebell (still available through Latin Percussion Inc.), and many cymbal companies are now making bell cymbals in 8-10" sizes. One well-kept secret, though, is the Chinese Wuhan series, available through World Percussion in California. The Wuhan Jing cymbals come in 3", 5", or 7" pairs. They have upturned edges and oversized cups. They are primarily hand cymbals, but they can easily be adapted to a drumkit by boring out the center hole to make way for a stand post. Their brilliance and cutting power are simply incredible! Best of all, the largest size Jings are only about \$50 a pair. I'm using a 7" one, upside-down on a mini holder.

The bell cymbals come in handy if you use a flat ride, which has no bell. Mounting a bell cymbal on an extension rod atop the flat ride would allow you access to a cymbal bell sound in almost the same

location as a regular ride cymbal.

One variation on bell cymbals are cup chimes. These are small, melodic-type cymbals with large domes and flattened edges. They produce a somewhat definite pitch, and are best used in ballads or soft tunes. If you play them loudly, you'll destroy them. Extension rods can be used to create a cymbal "tree" of cup chimes, for glissando effects.

### The Kitchen Sink

Even broken cymbals have their own special value as sound effects. A friend of mine had an old 18" Zildjian ride with a big chunk missing from it. I still remember the unique sound he got from that cymbal, as well as how vicious its sharp, broken edges could be.

Some drummers want a truly "trashy" sound, and have turned to, you guessed it, a genuine trashcan lid! Peter Erskine used one with Weather Report, and I seem to recall an ad a while back for a company that was actually *selling* such a thing!

One final idea, which uses your existing cymbals: You can get vibrato effects by hitting a cymbal, and then approaching it with the palm of your hand, back and forth, but not touching it. The barrier created by your hand, as well as the speed of your movements, dictates the speed of the vibrato. Try it!

This is only the tip of the iceberg, and I hope I've stimulated some experimentation on cymbal effects in your own setup. As Einstein once said, "Imagination is sometimes more important than knowledge."

---

*Bob Saydlowski, Jr. has played drums for 19 years and has logged over 1500 gigs. He writes for Modern Drummer Magazine, and teaches drums in Pittsfield, MA.*